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ABSTRACT

On the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the National Association of Child Advocates (NACA), this report discusses the current status of children, demonstrates the progress in the well-being of children due to the organization's efforts, identifies current challenges for child advocates, and describes the history of the organization. Statistics are presented on the current status of children with regard to child support, school readiness, immunizations, health insurance, poverty level, and other important characteristics. The report notes that although significant progress has been made with regard to health insurance coverage, child poverty rate, teen birth rate, participation in the School Breakfast Program, infant mortality rate, juvenile homicides, and child abuse and neglect rates, considerable challenges remain. Child advocacy is defined, and the work of the National Association of Child Advocates from its inception is described. A Child Advocacy Timeline from 1847 to the present day includes important milestones in the history of child advocacy efforts in the United States. The report also contains a list of members of the National Association of Child Advocates organized by state, describes the accomplishments of NACA members, and details the support NACA provides to its members. The report delineates the challenges for NACA in the next 15 years and presents a list of supporting organizations. The report concludes with the 1999-2000 annual report from the president of NACA. (KB)

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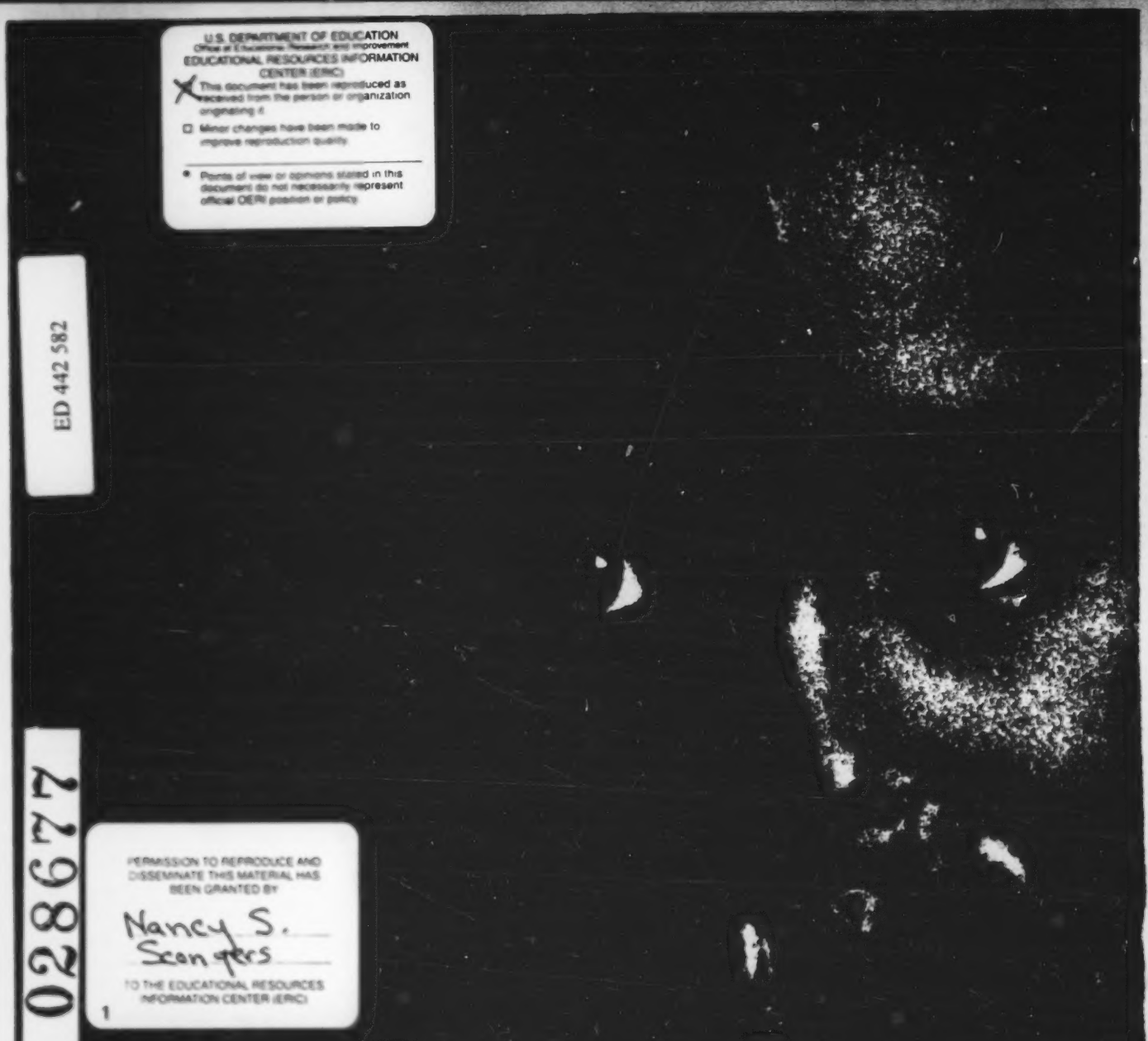

Voices for America's Children

THE PROGRESS AND THE PROMISE

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National Association of Child Advocates

National Association of Child Advocates' Mission

The mission of the National Association of Child Advocates is to improve the lives of children in the United States by enhancing the capacity of NACA member organizations to effectively advocate on behalf of children and their families.

Fundamental Beliefs

NACA and its members promote the right of all children: ★ to be economically secure and free from poverty and its debilitating effects ★ to have quality health care ★ to have quality educational opportunities throughout their childhood ★ to be safe from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence; and ★ to live in a nurturing family, in a supportive community committed to children's development to their maximum potential.

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This publication was made possible through funding from the Annie E. Casey and Freddie Mac Foundations. NACA thanks Catherine Crystal Foster for her extensive research and development of this report and Kelley Albert of Kelley Albert Design for the report's layout.

Join Us and Raise Your Voice for Children

The National Association of Child Advocates celebrated its 15th anniversary this year. This milestone was marked not by gala affairs, but by reflection on the history of NACA, the progress of the child advocacy movement and the promise of the new millennium.

Today NACA members in forty-seven states form a nationwide network committed to policy change that benefits children. They know that there's just not enough time to save children one at a time. So, the over sixty state and local NACA member organizations have raised their voices, speaking out on behalf of their only constituency—children. And because they have:

- ★ health care is available and accessible to more children;
- ★ child care is more abundant and of higher quality;
- ★ the child welfare system is steadily improving; and,
- ★ welfare reform's success is no longer being judged only by the reduction of caseloads, but also by its impact on children.

But, as the following report demonstrates even with these critical successes, challenges remain. One in four of the homeless in this country is a child. The incidence of low birthweight births is actually increasing and there are still insufficient caseworkers to rapidly investigate reports of child abuse. And, the list continues.

These challenges are coupled with important changes in this country. The definition of majority and minority populations is evolving. There is a growing senior population and the needs of these grandparents and great grandparents—health care, out-of-home care, abuse—strikingly mirror those of children. When these factors are combined with term limits for our elected officials and the continuing devolution of power, there is even greater need for the informed voices of longstanding child advocates.

NACA and its member organizations have already demonstrated that they make a difference for children, but we need to continue our vigilance, our advocacy and we need more voices.

I recently heard a politician remind an audience that we often say that children's futures are in our hands, but what we forget is that our future is in theirs. The child advocacy movement offers all of us an opportunity to shape the children who will lead our country in this new millennium and the world in which we live.

So, who are child advocates? Everyone who wants to ensure a better future for our children, for our country and for themselves. I hope you will add your voice to this growing choir for children. Together we can ensure that no child goes unheard.

TamaraCopeland

Tamara Lucas Copeland
President
National Association of Child Advocates
June, 2000

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The Status of Children Today

In this time of plenty, the status of children in America is nothing less than shameful. No child should be poor, abused, unsafe, uneducated, or left without health care. Yet the reality for millions of children today is unrelentingly bleak:

1 in 2	children with an absent parent receives no child support
1 in 3	children enters kindergarten not ready for school
1 in 4	children is not age-appropriately immunized
1 in 5	tenth grade girls smokes daily
1 in 6	children lives in a family receiving food stamps
1 in 7	children lacks health insurance
1 in 8	high school boys has carried a gun
1 in 9	children lives with a substance abuser
1 in 10	children lives in a family with an income less than half of the poverty level

The litany of ills can become mind-numbing. Inaccessible and unaffordable child care... Decaying schools... Ever-widening income inequality... Deaths from child abuse and neglect at the rate of three per day.

But it does not have to be this way. We now know, more clearly than ever before, what we need to do to help all children thrive. It is merely left for us to act. We are now armed with scientific evidence to buttress what most parents already instinctively knew about the importance of a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment for the healthy brain development of young children. Decades of research and experience have given us guidance on how to support older children as well. Our knowledge makes the inaction of so many all the more tragic.

Photo courtesy of KIDS COUNT in Delaware

"We can no longer sit at social gatherings or professional conferences quietly shaking our heads, saying 'Someone should do something about that.' We can no longer see suffering or injustice and only think, 'Someone should do something.' We must be that someone. We must act."

— Tamara Lucas Copeland, President, NACA

We've Made Progress.... But There Still Is Work To Do

Child advocates have won many hard fought battles to protect children in recent years, but we must do more. Now is not a time for complacency. It is a time for mustering our energy, for taking stock of the work yet undone, and for ACTION.

- ★ **Federal and state legislation has expanded health insurance eligibility in publicly funded programs for millions of children over the past decade.**
- ★ **But more than 11 million children (1 in 7) lack coverage and 4.7 million children are potentially eligible for Medicaid but not enrolled.**

- ★ **The child poverty rate has dipped significantly below 20 percent for the first time since 1980.**
- ★ **But the number of homeless children has soared, and 5.8 million children live in extreme poverty.**

- ★ **Teen birth rates have declined over the past two decades, and have fallen at least 20% in more than 10 states since 1991.**
- ★ **But the declines have been much smaller for Latina teens and 17% of teen mothers still go on to have a second child.**

- ★ **Participation in the School Breakfast Program set records in 1999, and the number of low-income children served by the program doubled since 1989.**
- ★ **But more than 3 million children still suffer from hunger.**

- ★ **Infant mortality has declined steadily for decades to a low of 7.2 deaths per 1,000 births in 1997.**
- ★ **But black infants still die at twice the rate of white infants.**

- ★ **From 1993-98, juvenile homicides declined 56%, violent youth crime declined 37%, and overall youth crime declined 14%.**
- ★ **But an average of nearly 12 children were killed every day by firearms in 1997, and legislation categorizing youth as "violent predators" still proliferates.**

- ★ **The number of child victims of abuse and neglect declined 11% from 1993-1998.**
- ★ **But an estimated 1,100 children died as a result of maltreatment in 1998.**

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What is NACA?

The National Association of Child Advocates (NACA) is the *only* nationwide network of professional state and local child advocacy organizations. It works to improve the lives of children by strengthening the capacity of its member organizations to advocate effectively for kids.

Located *in* Washington, DC, it is anything but *of* Washington, DC. NACA recognizes that the statehouses and county commissions and city halls across America are where the rubber meets the road for America's children. And it is at the state and local levels where committed and creative advocates can develop the solutions and effective partnerships that promote safety, health and security for children in their backyards. In this era of devolution, NACA sits squarely where it always has, and where it needs to be. While other Washington-based organizations focus on Capitol Hill, NACA turns its attention outward, keeping its own profile low and the spotlight on the states.

NACA uses a range of approaches, from training, to providing technical assistance, to serving as an information broker. It enhances the organizational capacity, leadership, management skills, and infrastructure of its members, as well as increasing their knowledge base in substantive children's issue areas and advocacy strategies—from budget advocacy to community mobilization. How does NACA do it? It works as the information superhighway among child advocacy organizations around the nation from Oregon to Maine and from Minnesota to Texas.

"NACA has been enormously helpful over the years. It's a great network and it's a great family. I think the world of the people involved, both the national staff and the members."

— Cora Greenberg, Executive Director, Westchester Children's Association

What Is Child Advocacy?

Child advocacy is about speaking out, speaking up, and speaking the truth. It is about joining neighborhoods together, building connections among institutions, and strengthening families within homes. It is about lifting up, reaching out, and embracing those across divides. It is about using facts, using faces, and using every tool possible to improve the lives of children and families.

Child advocacy thrives in a multitude of forms. Whether it's five committed parents in a housing project circulating petitions for a safe playground, a city-wide coalition of teachers and social workers seeking approval for comprehensive school health services, a professional staff of 10 lobbyists, analysts and organizers working statewide to reform the child welfare system, or any other group of people struggling to make life better for the children around them, it's child advocacy.

The country has witnessed the emergence, growth, and unprecedented impact of professional, independent child advocacy organizations—non-profit organizations dedicated to making policy and system changes for children. Formal child advocacy organizations may focus on children in their neighborhoods, in their city, in their region, in their state, or in their nation. They employ a range of techniques generally categorized as legislative and administrative lobbying, litigation, public education, research, and citizen mobilization. Armed with data, they advocate for legislative changes, challenge unjust policies that harm children, and inform parents and other voters about children's needs. These child advocates work to improve the whole child, turning their energies on issues including health care, poverty, hunger, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, child care, and violence prevention.

A child advocate is motivated by a fierce belief that we, as a society, can do better for our children. And every day, every year, across America, child advocates make a difference.

"When, as an elected official and a policy maker, you try to get hard data about whether or not children are well-served by the programs in place, you'll be hard-pressed to get a bureaucracy that says, 'actually, our programs are failing.' So ... a child advocacy organization bringing you data is an important resource for another view on the success or not of existing programs, a quality check, if you will, on information coming up through your bureaucracy."

— S. Joseph Simitian, County Supervisor, Santa Clara County (CA) (former mayor and school board member)

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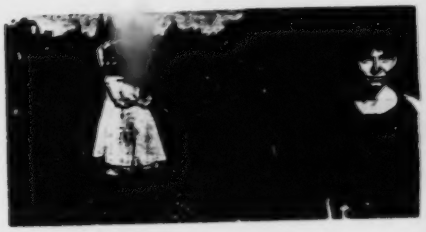
CHILD ADVOCACY TIMELIN

1847
Newark Orphan Asylum, parent organization of the Association for Children of New Jersey (a NACA member) is founded

1881
Wisconsin Conference on Charities and Corrections, later renamed the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (a NACA member) is founded



1904
National Child Labor Committee is established, laying the foundation for contemporary child advocacy

1909
White House sponsors the first Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, which issues a statement declaring poverty alone should not be grounds for removing children from their families

1910
Connecticut State Conference on Charities and Corrections, later renamed the Connecticut Association for Human Services (a NACA member), is founded

1912
Congress authorizes the Children's Bureau in the Department of Labor

1914
Westchester Children's Association (a NACA member) is founded - the nation's first multi-issue, independent children's organization that was established with a focus on advocacy

1919
White House sponsors a Conference on Children, which issues a statement calling for universally available health care

Why Is Child Advocacy Important?

A county legislator in California says it best: "We get very few eight-year-olds who come to the microphone before the Board of Supervisors." Someone must step up to that microphone and defend their interests –and those of their little sisters and older brothers, neighbors and classmates.

Not only can't children speak in the halls of power, they do not have high-paid lobbyists to do the speaking for them. In a political arena in which money, regrettably, often talks, it is frequently not enough to be on the side of decency, fairness, and logic. Some voices—the voices of advocates—need to speak above the din of special interests and present the hard data, the reasoned analyses, the personal stories, and the range of solutions that demonstrate what children need and what we can, and must, do to meet those needs.

Without advocacy watchdogs monitoring the programs and systems that serve children, accountability is often lost. Without advocates showing policymakers and voters that positive change is possible, it is too easy to sink into complacency. Without advocates bringing solutions and success stories to the table, it is too convenient to point to failures and throw up our hands in defeat. The independent member child advocacy organizations of NACA are the watchdogs, visionaries, and voices of hope our children need.

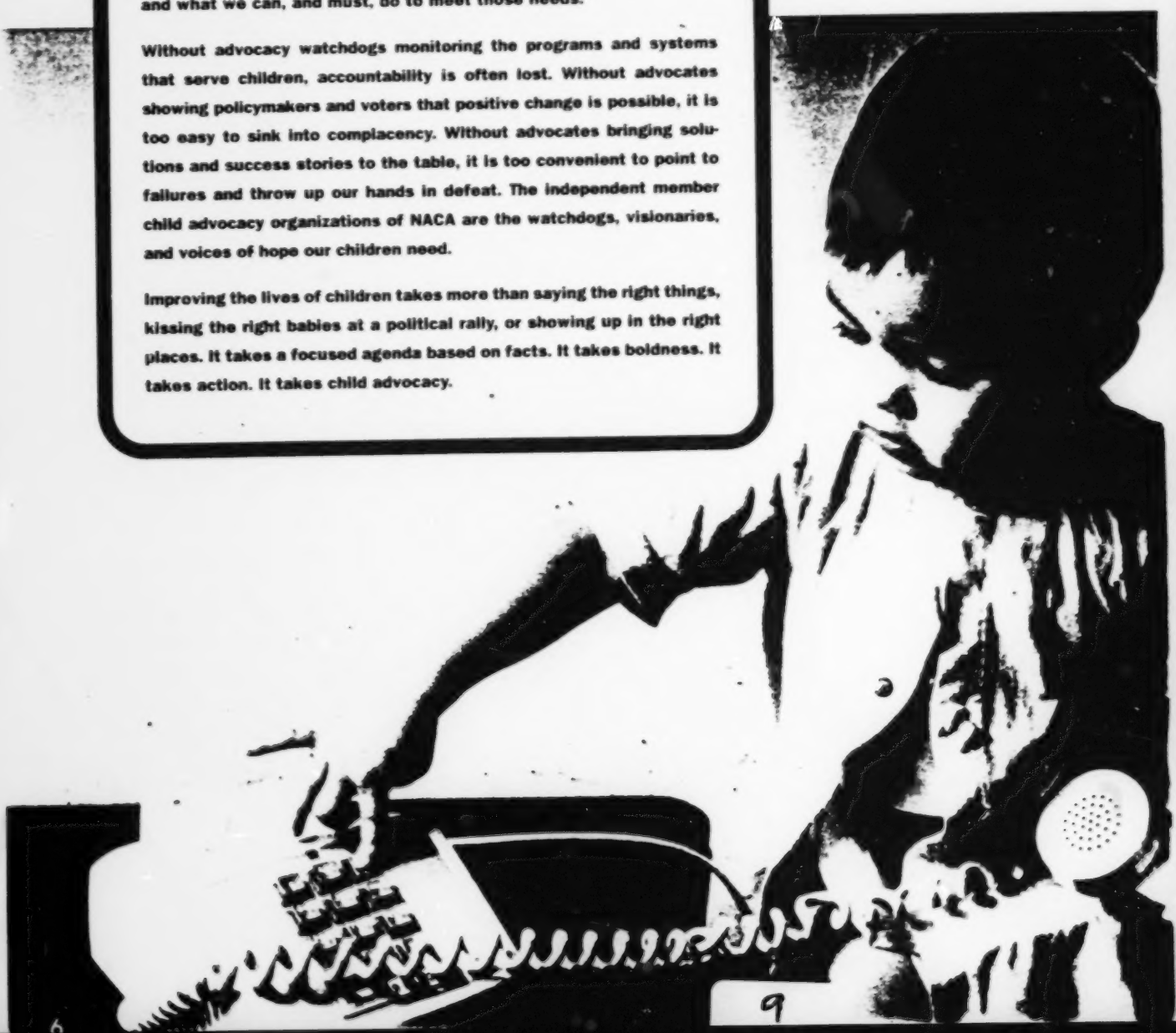
Improving the lives of children takes more than saying the right things, kissing the right babies at a political rally, or showing up in the right places. It takes a focused agenda based on facts. It takes boldness. It takes action. It takes child advocacy.

"It is far easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

— Frederick Douglass

"Never in U.S. history has there been a constituency so popular (children) with so little political clout."

— Christopher Dodd, U.S. Senator, Connecticut



NACA's 1999 Forum of Chief Executives

NACA strengthens child advocacy organizations by:

- ★ organizing an annual Forum of Chief Executives, the only venue designed exclusively for leaders of state and local multi-issue child advocacy organizations to share information
- ★ connecting members in peer-to-peer mentoring exchanges
- ★ publishing resources and sponsoring leadership training for members
- ★ working with state coalitions to create independent, multi-issue child advocacy organizations where they do not yet exist

NACA enhances issue-based advocacy among its members by:

- ★ identifying, publicizing and promoting best practices among the membership
- ★ exchanging information through regular mailings and one-on-one conversations
- ★ reviewing and interpreting federal legislation and proposals from a state-based perspective
- ★ convening training sessions, seminars, and conference calls
- ★ publishing training manuals, issue briefs, fact sheets, and media materials for its members

When NACA provides information to its members, it always does so with respect for the needs and insights of those outside the Beltway. As W.K. Kellogg Foundation Program Officer Miguel Satut observes, NACA "can translate [legislation] and translate it in such a way that members can use it in their own setting, without necessarily dictating...It allows the states and communities out there to figure out what really would work best for them."

NACA supports and builds the network, recognizing that children, and the state and local advocates who represent them, come first.

"Now, with the U.S. economy performing at its peak, we have an unprecedented opportunity to back up our words with actions... there is no better time to demonstrate the depth of our commitment to America's children, especially the poorest among them."

— U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN)

1921
Congress enacts the Sheppard-Towner Act, providing federal matching funds for states to offer health clinics for pregnant women and young children (later repealed)

1924
League of Nations approves the Declaration on the Rights of the Child

1928
Child Welfare League of America is incorporated (after being organized in 1915)

1929
Group of physicians establishes the American Academy of Pediatrics

1935
Congress enacts Aid to Dependent Children program (later renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children) as part of the Social Security Act, primarily to help widows maintain their children in their homes

1938
Congress prohibits "oppressive child labor" in the Fair Labor Standards Act, a major triumph for child advocates, after more than 100 years of state and federal legislative efforts to reform child labor practices

1944
Citizens Committee for Children of New York (a NACA member) is founded with the support of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt

NACA's 15-year Journey

The 1960s shook America's complacency, as the nation grappled with the civil rights struggle, widespread social upheaval, and the rediscovery of poverty as a matter of national concern. In the aftermath of that decade of reawakening, a fledgling movement began to take shape in states across the country. Concerned citizens independently began to band together—often as two-person volunteer operations—and started to advocate for systemic changes to help children in need. The California Children's Lobby, Kentucky Youth Advocates, Massachusetts Advocacy Center, Association for Children of New Jersey, Florida Center for Children and Youth, and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families were a few in the vanguard. They worked alone, often without colleagues or significant financial support.

The seed is planted

One such advocacy pioneer, Jim Lardie, fueled by an abiding outrage about the condition of vulnerable children, opened the Institute for Child Advocacy in Ohio in 1976. But he felt the need to brainstorm with other child advocates about policy, strategies, and organizational management. And he knew that broad mobilization was necessary to create meaningful social change for children. Two years later, he circulated a paper about forming a national, multi-issue institute for child advocacy. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation recognized the potential in the proposal and offered seed money to help Lardie support advocates in Illinois and Missouri, and to convene other advocates from around the country.

With the Clark grant, in 1981, Lardie and advocates from 13 other states came together in Cleveland. They shared ideas and provided each other with the unique kind of inspiration that only fellow child advocates can provide. They met annually for the next three years and their numbers grew. "It was enormously exhilarating and important to have [this] discussion," recalls Ciro Scalera, Executive Director of Association for Children of New Jersey and current NACA Board

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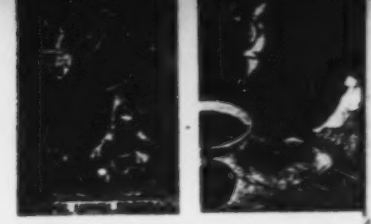
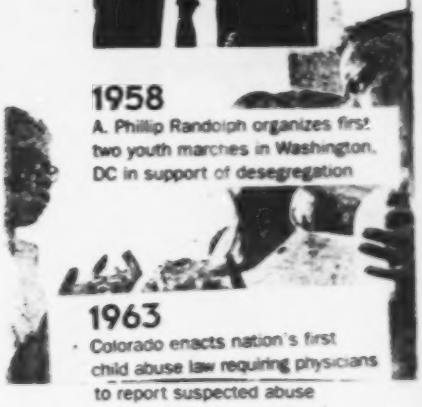


1946
Congress enacts the National School Lunch Act, providing states and territories funds to operate school lunch programs for all children, particularly benefiting low-income children

1954
U.S. Supreme Court strikes down "separate but equal" education for whites and blacks as unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education

1958
A. Phillip Randolph organizes first two youth marches in Washington, DC in support of desegregation



1963
Colorado enacts nation's first child abuse law requiring physicians to report suspected abuse

Chair. We asked, 'Why does it have to end? Why can't we loosely associate and make it happen?' There was a need more than once a year to continue this communication and networking."

Thus, the informal network became official. The family of child advocacy organizations incorporated in late 1984 to form the Association of State-Based Child Advocacy Organizations, with Lardie at the helm. The group, known as ACA, was charged with increasing the number of independent state-based child advocacy organizations and enhancing their effectiveness. With minimal staff, ACA

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Meade, Anthropologist

"Given the importance and the amount of state-level policy activity, to have an association that can support and enhance quality exchanges and learning among child advocates is vital. NACA is filling that role for the child advocacy community."

— Jennifer Baratz Gross, Annie E. Casey Foundation

1963
Congress establishes Project Head Start, providing comprehensive child development services to low-income children and their families, and indirectly providing an organizing vehicle within communities

1965
Congress establishes Medicaid, Title XIX of the Social Security Act, providing health care for the poor

1964-67
Following advocacy by physicians, all 50 states enact laws mandating certain professionals to report suspected child abuse

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"Each of the great social achievements of recent decades has come about not because of government proclamations but because people organized, made demands and made it good politics for governments to respond. It is the political will for the people that makes and sustains the political will of governments."

— James Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF

initially served primarily as the thread that linked the advocates nationwide who had been searching for a connection with their peers. ACA maintained a headquarters in Ohio and grew enormously over the next decade. The membership diversified to include city-based and regional organizations by 1986. It nurtured new organizations where only a small seed of an idea existed. Its flagship event, the annual Forum of Chief Executives, Lardie remembers, sparked a "great excitement and re-energizing," which it continues to do to this day. "The most important thing was that they could get together and see that there were others like themselves. And they could swim upstream a little stronger."

Evolution of a movement

Many advocates were feeling that the tides were turning increasingly against children as federal budget cuts in children's programs continued throughout the 1980s. Federal child welfare policy had shifted toward family preservation, creating greater tensions for advocates who had toiled to promote removal of children from dangerous family situations. Child poverty rates had risen in the early 1980s, and then rose again in the early '90s. The proportion of children living in extreme poverty (below half of the poverty line) doubled between 1975 and 1993. Child advocates, it seemed at the time, needed more ideas, colleagues, and support than ever.

As ACA evolved and its members grew in total number, size and sophistication, Lardie passed the baton to a new leader, Eve Brooks, who had founded New York's State-wide Youth Advocacy, an ACA member organization. Brooks became president of ACA in 1991, and the following year, moved the organization to Washington, DC. While ACA, soon to be renamed the National Association of Child Advocates (NACA), steadfastly kept its focus on the states, Brooks recognized that a Washington presence would not only give NACA's members access to more information about policy and practice, but it would also give state-based groups visibility and a voice at the national level. "It's very valuable for national organizations and folks on the

Hill to find out what the real world is like in the states," notes Carol Kamin, Executive Director of the Children's Action Alliance (AZ).

NACA staff expanded to provide its members with technical assistance both on substantive children's issues and organizational strategy and development. At the same time, the foundation community had begun to embrace child advocacy. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's investment in its national KIDS COUNT initiative—which involves dozens of NACA members—strengthened the ability of state-based child advocacy organizations to produce hard data in support of their positions and maintain the financial stability to accomplish the work that needed to be done. Other major foundations began to support NACA and its work both on issue-based advocacy and organizational development.

Child advocacy in the era of devolution

Changes in federal policy and the shifting political tides of 1994, followed by welfare reform legislation in 1996, presented new challenges for child advocates. But the devolution of decision-making authority to the state and local levels opened up new opportunities for child advocacy organizations in the states, as well. NACA's members, and NACA itself, were just where they needed to be in order to promote positive policies for children in the new era.

Tamara Lucas Copeland, an advocate with a background of leadership in government and non-profit children's services, assumed the presidency of NACA in 1997, as the effects of devolution were being felt. She has led the organization at a time when its members are having ever-greater impact on the lives of children in their states. Now more than 60 members strong, with a presence in almost every state, NACA is at the forefront of a child advocacy organization movement.

"We have created a critical mass. [Since NACA was founded,] there is more support for child advocacy in general. We really were lone wolves in those early '80s, but both at the national level and at the local level there are more voices joining us," reflects Kathy Bigsby Moore, Executive Director of Voices for Children in Nebraska. And, most importantly, "As a movement, what we've done is gone beyond saying 'ain't it awful' and we've become part of the solutions," observes Arizona's Kamin.

"NACA has grown to become a professional organization while retaining the best aspects of a family."

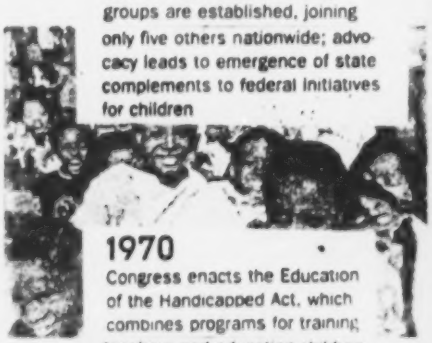
— David Richart, Executive Director, National Institute on Children, Youth, and Families (KY).

1966
Congress enacts the Child Nutrition Act, establishing the School Breakfast Program to assist schools in providing students with good nutrition (initially a temporary measure, made permanent in 1975)

1967
U.S. Supreme Court holds in *In re Gault* that juveniles have specified constitutional rights in juvenile court proceedings

1969
15,000 Mexican-American students walk out of schools in Los Angeles to advocate for bilingual education and increased rights for Mexican-American students

1970-1980
Eight multi-issue, independent state or local child advocacy groups are established, joining only five others nationwide; advocacy leads to emergence of state complements to federal initiatives for children



1970
Congress enacts the Education of the Handicapped Act, which combines programs for training teachers and educating children with disabilities

1973
Marian Wright Edelman founds the Children's Defense Fund

1974
Congress enacts the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which provides financial assistance to states for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect

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Who Are NACA Members?

NACA's members are a vibrant network of 63 organizations, serving children in 47 states and 11 cities and communities. They are:

★ **Non-profit,** so children, not dollars, are the bottom line.

★ **Independent and professionally run,** answering to no one but the children whose interests they represent. Independent of government and specific service providers' interests, they are not beholden to any organization that could compromise their ability to take controversial positions or advocate for changes that benefit children.

★ **Multi-issue,** recognizing that improving the lives of children and families requires looking at the whole — all the systems, programs and concerns that touch the lives of children, whether it be health care, child welfare, welfare reform, hunger, child care and development, education, juvenile justice or violence prevention.

★ **Advocates,** not direct service providers, working to promote positive change, replicate successes, and maintain constant vigilance.

NACA members focus on policy solutions rather than merely lamenting problems or focusing on the deficits of children and youth. They all use a range of strategies to accomplish their goals, based on the diverse needs of the communities they serve. They build partnerships and work in coalition, but are not afraid to act boldly and do the right thing, even if it means they occasionally must stand alone. They have earned the respect of policy makers, service providers, media, other advocates and families in their communities and often serve as *the* authority on children's issues in their state or locality.

Each organization—whether it serves an entire state, a region within a state, or a city—emerged from the determination, outrage, and optimism of the citizens in its own backyard. Each sets its own agenda, tailored to the particular needs of the community's children. While NACA has played a key role in building some of its member organizations, it does not have "chapters." Each member organization is a vital and independent part of its own community, at the same time that it learns and gives back by being a part of the national NACA network. And it is the existence of a *network* of state- and community-based child advocacy organizations that provides such an important opportunity for the members to grow and for the interests of children to gain more attention nationally. Individually and united, NACA members are improving the lives of children.

National Association of Child Advocates:

AK No member currently

AL VOICES for Alabama's Children

AR Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families

AZ Children's Action Alliance

CA Children Now

CA Children's Advocacy Institute

CA Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth

CA Kids in Common: A Children & Families Collaborative

CO Colorado Children's Campaign

CT Connecticut Association for Human Services

CT Connecticut Voices for Children

DC DC Action for Children

DE KIDS COUNT in Delaware

FL The Center for Florida's Children/ The Florida Children's Campaign

GA Georgians for Children

HA Hawaii Kids Watch™

IA Child & Family Policy Center

ID Idaho KIDS COUNT

IL Voices for Illinois Children

IN Indiana Youth Institute

KS Kansas Action for Children

KY Kentucky Youth Advocates

KY National Institute on Children, Youth, & Families

LA Agenda for Children

MA Massachusetts Committee for Children and Youth

MD Advocates for Children and Youth

MD Maryland Association of Resources for Families & Youth

ME Maine Children's Alliance

MI Michigan's Children

MN Children's Defense Fund - Minnesota

MO Citizens for Missouri's Children

MS Mississippi Forum on Children & Families

MT No member currently

NC North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute

ND Kids are Important in North Dakota

NE Voices for Children in Nebraska

NH Children's Alliance of New Hampshire

NJ Association for Children of New Jersey

NM New Mexico Advocates for Children & Families

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"Across the board, NACA and its...member organizations have developed a 'track' record and the individuals within the organizations are well respected ... Just as members consistently reported using the NACA materials because of the trust they have in NACA, so did state-level administrators, legislators and coalition partners report with great regularity that they used members' materials for the same reasons."

— RMC Research Corporation (Independent outcome evaluation of NACA Devolution Project, November 1998)

"The idea of being able to collaborate with colleagues about issues and strategies is critical to our individual success. Many of us are alone. We're the only ones who do this work in our communities. We need to get behind the story, explore ideas and strategies with respected colleagues without having to worry about turf."

— Shelly Yanoff, Executive Director, Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth

Members by State

NV No member currently

NY Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

NY Rochester Area Children's Collaborative

NY Statewide Youth Advocacy, Inc.

NY Westchester Children's Association

OH Children's Defense Fund — Ohio

OH Voices for Children and Families

OK Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

OR Children First for Oregon

PA Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

PA Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth

RI Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

SC Alliance for South Carolina's Children

SD South Dakota Coalition for Children

TN Black Children's Institute of Tennessee

TX A Vision for Children Center

TX CHILDREN AT RISK

TX Prevent Child Abuse Texas

TX Tarrant County Youth Collaboration

TX Texans Care For Children

UT Utah Children

VA The Action Alliance for Virginia's Children & Youth

VT Vermont Children's Forum

WA The Children's Alliance

WI Wisconsin Council on Children & Families

WV West Virginia KIDS COUNT Fund

WY Wyoming Children's Action Alliance

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1974

Congress enacts the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which provides funding for runaway youth and incentive payments to find alternative placements for status offenders and other youth

1975

Congress enacts the Earned Income Tax Credit, a refundable tax credit designed to help low-income working families (expanded several times subsequently, it has helped lift millions of children out of poverty)

1975

Congress enacts federal Child Support Enforcement program

1977

Hillary Rodham Clinton, later First Lady of Arkansas and First Lady of the U.S., spearheads the effort of concerned citizens to establish Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (a NACA member) and she serves as the organization's first board president

Courtesy of Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families

1978

Congress enacts the Indian Child Welfare Act, which restores greater decision-making authority to tribes in child welfare cases involving Indian children

1979

The American Civil Liberties Union establishes a Children's Rights Project (now the independent Children's Rights, Inc.), which litigates ground-breaking child welfare cases around the country

1980-90

Twenty-five multi-issue, independent state or local child advocacy groups are established, achieving a critical mass for a national child advocacy movement

NACA Members' Accomplishments

All across America, children are leading healthier, safer, and more secure lives because of the efforts of NACA's member child advocacy organizations. While there is still abundant work to do, NACA's members have proven time and time again that where there is a will, there is a way to improve the lives of children.

★ The Children's Action Alliance (AZ) chalked up a triumph for **prevention programs** in southern Arizona when it initiated and led a successful effort to dedicate 1% of the Pima County general fund to before-school, after-school and summer vacation programs for children—without increasing taxes.

★ After documenting a disturbing drop in the number of low-income children receiving health care coverage through Medicaid after welfare reform, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth joined with coalition partners in an intensive advocacy effort that led to **restoration of health care benefits** to 32,000 children and 8,000 parents, a state financed outreach campaign, and establishment of a system to ensure continued Medicaid authorization for families leaving welfare.

★ The Children's Alliance (WA) salvaged a spark of hope from the tragic death of an abused child. Based on a proposal by The Alliance, the legislature established an Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman to ensure that concerns about the state's child welfare system would be heard and lead to action. Since 1997, the ombudsman's work has led to **pervasive child welfare policy and system change in Washington.**

★ After documenting that one in five Rhode Island children was entering kindergarten with lead poisoning, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT launched a **comprehensive lead-poisoning awareness campaign** that galvanized a range of elected officials, housing advocates, health care professionals, universities and the media. This led to the creation of a lead abatement center, establishment of a permanent lead abatement revolving

"NACA has been very effective in educating its membership about key issues, making sure that members have access to information about what's going on nationally, that may or may not be happening in their states, but which... should be happening in their states."

— Susan Notkin, Director, Program for Children, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

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"Voices for Children [NACA's Nebraska member] does excellent work calling attention to an often overlooked segment of our society — our kids. I've worked with them for many years, both as a Congressman and as the Speaker of the Nebraska Legislature and I can attest that, in Nebraska, they're active in making a difference."

— U.S. Rep. Bill Barrett (R-NE)

fund, and paved the way for precedent-setting Medicaid reimbursement to replace or fix lead-painted windows.

★ Inspired by the involvement of one of its staff members in a public housing residents' council, Agenda for Children of Louisiana launched an ongoing series of **policy training sessions and town meetings for public housing residents,** in collaboration with the residents' council and local welfare rights organization. The residents now help shape Agenda for Children's policy positions and actively advocate before their legislators.

★ Children throughout Colorado benefit today from higher quality child care as a result of a tax "check-off" initiative promoted by the Colorado Children's Campaign and coalition partners that permits Coloradans to earmark part of their state tax refund for **improvements in child care quality,** increasing awareness of child care quality in the process.

★ Citizens for Missouri's Children has harnessed technology to provide a single source on the Internet for **early care and education data** that policymakers, businesses, service providers and parents can use to assess, plan, develop and use Missouri's early learning system.

And the list of accomplishments could go on and on.

NACA's members have worked long and hard to achieve their successes. "NACA members are building strong relationships with policymakers when many advocates are not. Proactive thinking and action of members and their coalitions; solid research and accessible publications; reputations for fairness and respect; and the strong personal leadership qualities of particular NACA member staff are key reasons for NACA members' success," says the RMC Research Corporation in an independent outcome evaluation of NACA's Devolution Project. America's children deserve nothing less.

1980
Congress enacts the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, providing permanency planning requirements, funding for foster care, adoption and other child welfare services

1981
Leaders of independent state-based child advocacy organizations from around the country meet together for the first time

1984
NACA is founded as the National Association of State-based Child Advocacy Organizations, referred to as the Association of Child Advocates (ACA)

1984-90
Following successful lobbying by advocates, Congress amends federal Medicaid law to expand coverage for low-income pregnant women and children

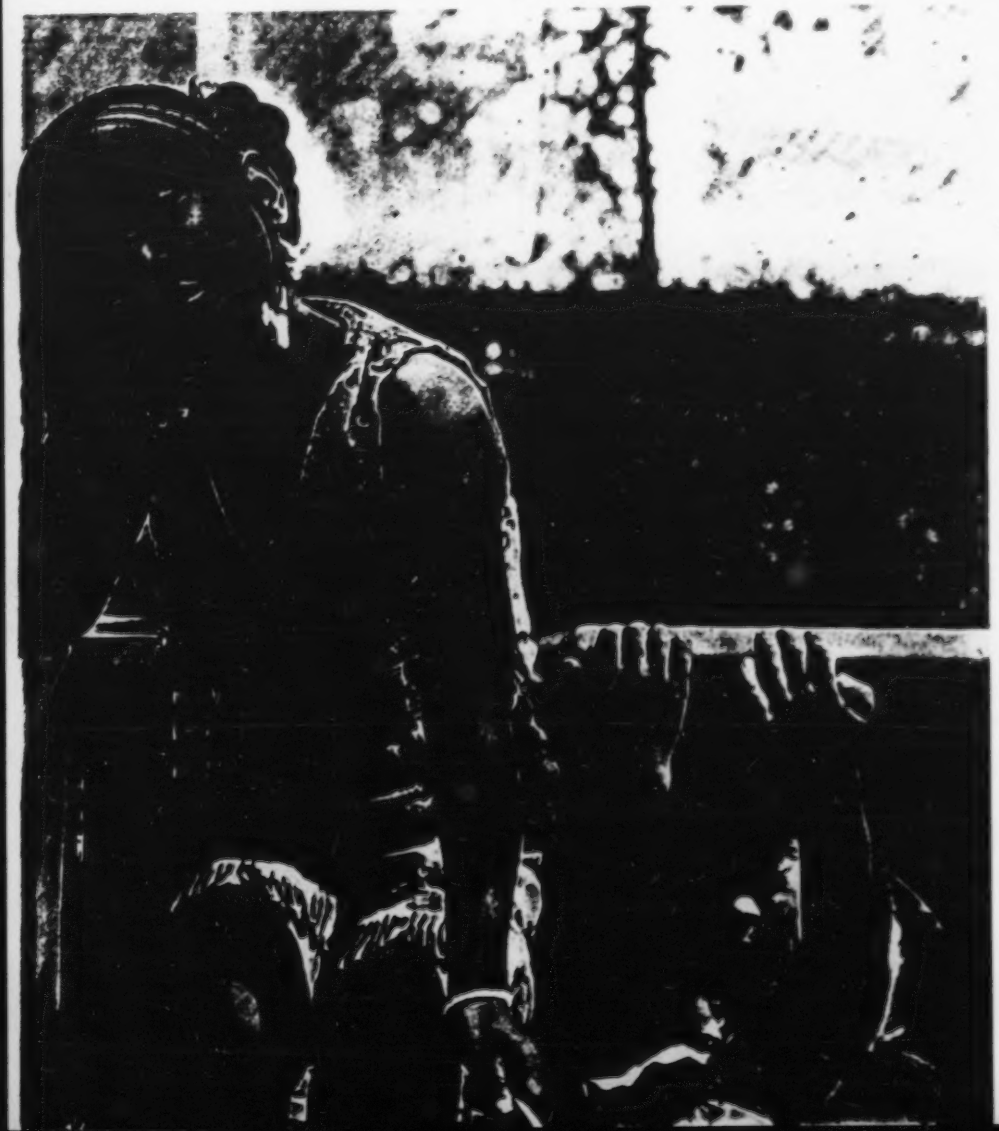
1989
Child advocates David Richart (Kentucky) and Steve Bing (Massachusetts) publish Fairness is a Kid's Game: Children, Public Policy and Child Advocacy in the States, a leading primer on child advocacy

1989
United States declines to sign the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, a position it maintains to this day

NACA's Support For Its Members

The skill, perseverance, and dedication of NACA members have been the key to their achievements. But the multitude of successes for children that NACA members have fought hard to achieve often have been nurtured by NACA. NACA is *there* for its members, working as the eyes and ears of the child advocacy movement, providing models, linking advocates, training staff, convening forums on critical advocacy issues, offering policy analysis, decoding the Washington jargon, and even offering financial support to help the network work for children. NACA provides assistance in ways as varied as the work of its members, for example:

- ★ Low-income parents on welfare in West Virginia who want to finish college or vocational school now can obtain approval to do so, thanks to advocacy by the West Virginia KIDS COUNT Fund, with technical support from NACA. NACA staff helped the West Virginia advocates obtain clarification from federal authorities for state legislators and administrators, which led to a reversal of state policy.
- ★ After attending an advocacy training workshop that NACA coordinated with NACA member the Association for Children of New Jersey, Kids In Common (KIC), the child advocacy group of the Silicon Valley, sponsored the first in a series of advocacy trainings for local youth. KIC used the skills learned and curriculum from the NACA workshop to train the youth to advocate for policy changes locally.
- ★ After attending a NACA Budget Advocacy meeting with the Maine Children's Alliance (MCA), a Maine state legislator sprang into action, and worked with MCA to secure a comprehensive package of early care and education legislation that makes quality programs more available to tens of thousands of Maine's children.



"We're inundated with national groups and national memos. The clarity of the bi-weekly [NACA] mailings and the assistance from staff have been invaluable."

— **Ciro Scalera, Executive Director, Association for Children of New Jersey & NACA Board Chair**

"NACA has enormous value. I'm a real cheerleader for what NACA is doing. The staff is outstanding and they are extremely helpful in providing the technical support that we need."

— **Susan H. Randall, Executive Director, South Dakota Coalition for Children**

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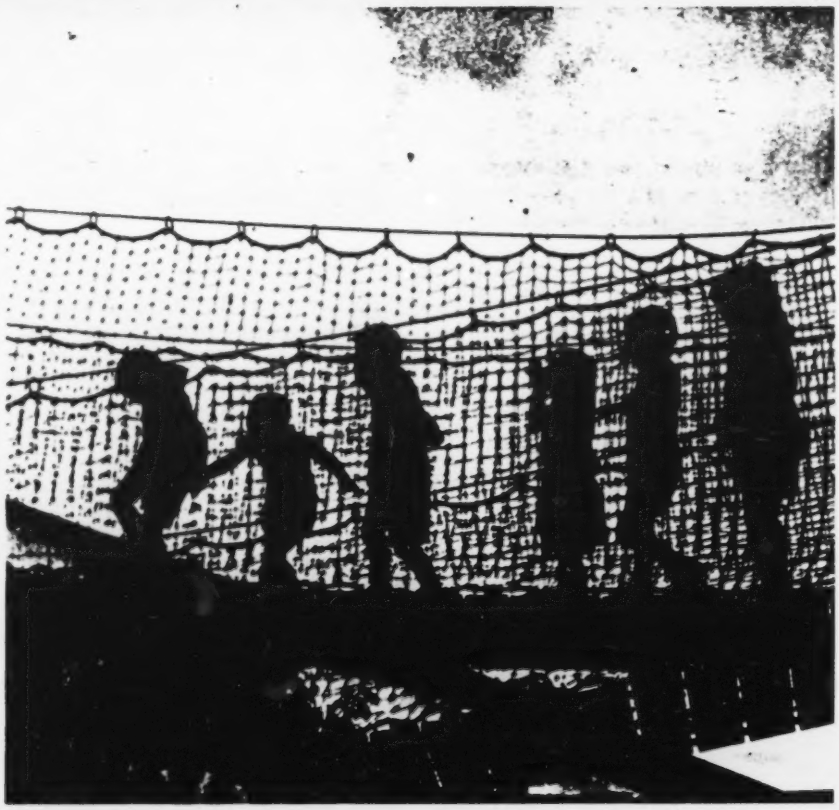

The information-sharing among state and local advocates at the heart of NACA's original mission still plays a prominent role in NACA operations today. Each member organization has something valuable to share, and NACA is always there to facilitate the exchange, whether by making a "match" between organizations, financing a site visit, or spreading the word about great ideas for kids.

★ After Utah Children learned through the NACA network about The Center for Florida's Children's tremendously effective children's campaign—catalyzing voters and elected officials to focus on kids—NACA stepped up with funding to bring Florida staff west to help start a campaign in Utah.

★ Wisconsin Council on Children and Families used NACA funding to visit Association for Children of New Jersey and see its child welfare hotline in action—a hotline, that generated data powerful enough to lead to a massive infusion of cash for child welfare services, and a leadership shake-up in the bureaucracy. The New Jersey hotline was inspired by a similar hotline developed by Kentucky Youth Advocates, which had also sent shockwaves through that state. It was NACA that arranged for the information transfer from Kentucky that helped give birth to New Jersey's hotline.

★ When the new executive director of the South Dakota Coalition for Children was evaluating strategies for developing a legislative agenda, NACA sponsored her visit to witness the process used by veteran advocates at the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy. "It really broadened my horizons about what child advocates in a state can achieve. It was mind expanding," the South Dakota advocate recalled.

The strength of the NACA network lies in the common commitment and enthusiasm about helping others help kids. Whether NACA participates in a conference call with a state coalition, disseminates model legislation crafted by another NACA member organization, presents training materials, or authors an issue brief that provides innovative analysis to advocates working for change in their statehouses, NACA offers the tools that make a difference for children across America.

1990-2000
Nineteen multi-issue, independent state or local child advocacy organizations are established; the era of devolution unfolds

1990
Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes the first national KIDS COUNT report

1991
NACA member Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth (San Francisco, CA) sponsors Proposition J, the first city charter amendment setting aside a portion of property tax annually to fund children's services

1992
NACA member North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute publishes the first "Children's Index" in the nation, documenting indicators of child well-being

1993
NACA member Kentucky Youth Advocates publishes Children's Champions: How Child Advocates Protect and Increase Budgets for Children, the first major publication on state-level children's budget advocacy

1993
Congress enacts the Family Preservation and Support Act, part of a child advocate-supported Children's Initiative

1994
Child advocates successfully urge Congress to enact one of the most significant federal investments in youth crime prevention ever, moderating a punitive crime bill

1995
NACA launches the Children's Budget Watch, the first cross-state study of state and federal expenditures on children's programs, services and unmet needs

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The Next 15 Years

What does the future hold for child advocacy?

The new millennium offers child advocates the opportunity to take the key tools at their disposal—information, communication and mobilization—and hone them to even greater levels of effectiveness. The ability of advocates to collect, analyze, and disseminate hard data in support of their positions has grown astronomically since the early days of the child advocacy movement. Advocates must seize the opportunity to use the facts. Technology has spawned new outlets for communication. Advocates must speak even more compellingly to rise above the crowd of competing messages. Additionally a healthy perspective on the mass mobilizations of the past provides an opportunity to revisit traditional strategies to move the political will. Advocates must have the courage to act boldly and adapt successful strategies to the present.

The next 15 years of NACA will be no ordinary time. The early 21st century promises a host of major events that will have long-standing effects on child well-being in America. The results of the 2000 Census will offer advocates a treasure trove of information and lead to political realignments that could have vast repercussions for children. Demographic shifts will change the color and dominant heritage of America's "majority" and "minorities," leading to reassessment of our national identity and political priorities. Congressional reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program (the block grant created by the 1996 federal welfare reform law), the Child Care and Development Fund, and the Food Stamp Program, all in 2002, could lead to significant policy shifts in government programs vital to children's interests. At the same time, child advocates will have to address a range of other broad challenges that have emerged:

★ What will happen to children when the nation's longest economic expansion comes to an end?

★ How can schools, governments, communities, and programs serving families best deal with the widening gulf between the haves and have-nots?

★ How can we mitigate the ill effects of the continuing dissolution of family structure in American life?

★ How do we ensure that the millions of uninsured children become enrolled in health insurance programs, and how do we provide the specialized services, like mental health care, that are so often unavailable to children?

★ How do we prevent parents and policy makers from abandoning hope in the public schools?

★ How do we provide accessible, affordable, high-quality child care for the children who need it, now that so many parents have joined the workforce?

★ How do we ensure that as the American population ages, we make children's needs a priority?

★ How do we transform the threatening stereotype of America's teens into an image of promise for the future?

★ How do we maximize opportunities for positive policy change in an era of on-going devolution and electoral term limits?

How each element of our society will become part of the solution to these problems is uncertain, but what is certain is that responsibility must be shared. The next 15 years could lead us to a new consensus about the role of government, families, communities, non-profit organizations, religious institutions, schools, and the private sector in supporting children and families. By keeping our eyes on the ultimate prize—a nation of secure and healthy children— we can reach that point in a way that unites rather than divides us.

"[I]t is probably not an overstatement to say that the fate of the most vulnerable fraction of the rising generation of American kids will turn on the resourcefulness, vision, creativity, boldness and competence of state governments and their social policies."

— Douglas W. Nelson, President, Annie E. Casey Foundation

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"Much could be achieved in this vast, heterogeneous nation of ours if we thought of our entire population as a very large extended family, tied by history to a shared destiny and requiring a strong ethic of mutual aid. The central question is: Can we do better than we are doing now?"

— David A. Hamburg, Past President, Carnegie Corporation of NY

Child advocates can help us keep that prize in our sights. The harder the questions become, the greater the obstacles, the more we need child advocates to help us address them. The problems of America's children today and the problems we will have to resolve in the future defy simple solutions and cannot be solved alone. There are far too many uphill climbs to make. In the words of Roz McGee, the Executive Director of Utah Children, "As a child advocacy organization, we need to be about risk-taking. There are plenty of organizations around that will do the easy stuff."

The members of NACA take risks every day in their statehouses, their school board meetings, their newspapers' opinion pages, and their streets. For the sake of all our children, it is time to join together with them and it is time for every one of us to act.

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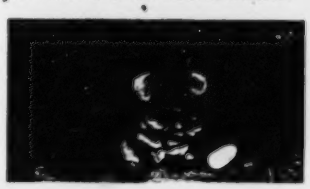
1995
Family Circle Magazine names NACA member Wyoming P.A.R.E.N.T. (now known as WY Children's Action Alliance) as one of the "20 Best Programs that Can Make America Great"

1996
The Children's Defense Fund organizes a national rally entitled "Stand for Children" in Washington, DC, generating mass media coverage

1996
Congress repeals the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program and creates the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant as part of comprehensive welfare reform legislation (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act), which time-limits assistance, conditions aid on work, and grants significant authority to the states

1997
Congress enacts the State Child Health Insurance Program, expanding health care coverage for millions of low-income children



1997
Congress enacts the Adoption and Safe Families Act, shifting the emphasis in child welfare policy from family preservation to permanency, focusing on expedited adoption of abused and neglected children

1999
Two students open fire at a Littleton, Colorado high school, killing 13 people and wounding almost two dozen others before killing themselves; the incident was one of several highly publicized school shootings in the past two years, escalating the debate on gun control, treatment of juvenile offenders, and school safety

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NACA thanks David Richart, National Institute on Children, Youth & Families (KY), for providing much of the data for this timeline. NACA would also like to thank the National Archives for supplying many of the historical photographs used above.

Supporting the Work of the National Association of Child Advocates

The National Association of Child Advocates has been fortunate to have received funding from a number of supporters over its 15 year history. The following funders have enabled NACA to significantly expand its membership and increase its services:

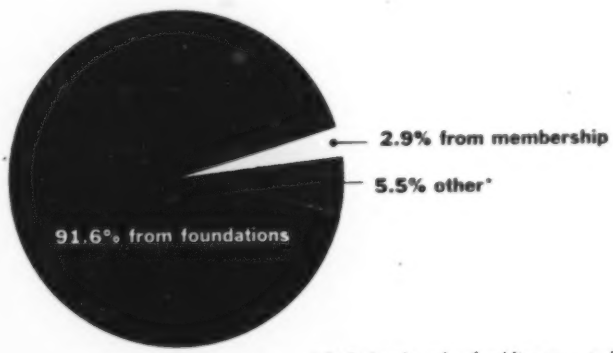
Aetna Foundation
AFSCME
Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Beatrice Foundation
Butler Family Fund
The Casey Family Foundation
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
The Cleveland Foundation
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Foundation for Child Development
Freddie Mac Foundation
Frey Foundation
George Gund Foundation
Greater KC Community Foundation and Affiliate Trusts
James C. Penney Foundation
Juvenile Law Center
Lilly Endowment, Inc.
Magnolia Fund
Mary Reynold's Babcock Foundation
Max & Marion Hoffman Foundation
Nathan Cummings Foundation
The Patricia Chernoff Charitable Trust
Pew Charitable Trusts
Primerica Foundation
Prudential Foundation
Public Welfare Foundation
Skillman Foundation
The Travelers Foundation
William T. Grant Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The National Association of Child Advocates is also grateful to its Board of Trustees and those who have contributed directly to the organization or through NACA's affiliation with the Children's Charities of America.

Summary of Income and Expenses

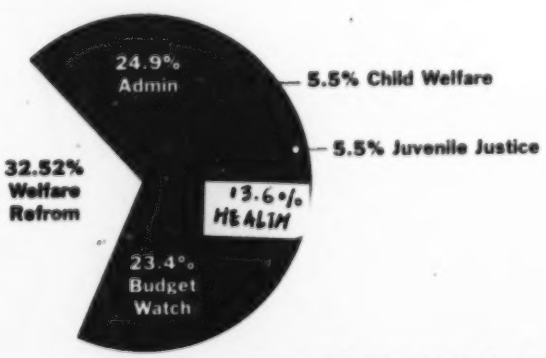
These pie-charts represent an average of the last five years' income sources and revenue allocations. Current financial information is either included in the back pocket of this document or is available by contacting (202) 289-0777 or naca@childadvocacy.org

Income



** Includes the sale of publications, individual donations, the Combined Federal Campaign, and other miscellaneous contributions and income.*

Expenses



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National Association of Child Advocates

1999-2000 Annual Report from the President

The National Association of Child Advocates (NACA) works to improve the lives and living conditions of children in the United States by strengthening child advocacy organizations in states and communities across the country. In the past year, NACA has advanced this mission through traditional approaches and innovative strategies that recognize the growth of the NACA network, the diversity of the member organizations, and the evolving landscape for children and families in America. Further, NACA has strengthened its infrastructure to ensure the continued support of these efforts.

Core Services to NACA Members

With member input, NACA reaffirmed and strengthened its core services:

★ **Biweekly Member Mailing** — This digest of current research, proposed federal legislation, best practices from across the country, and funding opportunities continues to be a highly valued NACA member benefit. NACA's staff has become increasingly adept at identifying what is important to the membership, reviewing that information from a state and local child advocacy perspective, and summarizing that information succinctly.

★ **Issue Briefs** — These in-depth focused reports present policy analysis and data on emerging issues of interest to child advocates. This year, NACA's staff examined and reported on four critical issues important to child advocates:

- *Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers: A Child Advocate's Guide to Helping them Contribute to the Support of their Children*
- *Planning the Beginning With the End in Mind: Evaluating Outreach and Enrollment Strategies, A Case Study*
- *Health Plan Performance Measurement: What It Is, How It Impacts CHIP and Medicaid, and Why Child Advocates Should Care*
- *A Child Advocate's Guide to State Child Protective Services Reform*

★ **Management Briefs** — These publications built on the expertise of executive directors of member organizations. NACA invited three member organizations to share their acumen with their colleagues in brief and topical papers.

- *Y2K: Will NACA Members Be Ready?*, Janice Gruendel, Ph.D., Executive Director, and Wendy Fleischer, Policy Intern, Connecticut Voices for Children
- *Connecting Non-Partisan Politics to Children's Policy: The Florida Model* (accompanied by a videotape), Jack Levine, President, The Center for Florida's Children, and Roy Miller, Director, The Florida Children's Campaign
- *Turning the Tide for Children in Maryland: Moving from "Projectitis" to a Coherent Whole*, Jann Jackson, Executive Director, Advocates for Children and Youth (MD)

★ **On-Demand Technical Assistance** — NACA staff continued the signature service of rapid response to member inquiries. NACA's staff responded to hundreds of requests for technical assistance, advice and guidance. The results of NACA's responsiveness and expertise were particularly evident in the example summarized in the following text box.

NACA Assists Members' Advocacy Work: A Vermont Example

When the Vermont Children's Forum was considering ways to present the needs of welfare recipients in a positive light to conservative legislators, they contacted NACA. Based upon strategies that had proven successful for other NACA members, Debbie Stein, NACA's Devolution Project Director, was able to help Vermont advocates to frame a message that changed the tenor of the debate. She also suggested that they seek a provision for an independent evaluation of the proposed program, a strategy that the NACA member in Arkansas had used successfully. At the request of the Vermont Senate, Ms. Stein guided the Children's Forum to a number of resources for identifying appropriate indicators of child wellbeing to be included in the evaluation.

★ **A Great Idea Series —** Initiated in 1998 with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, each two-page installment in the *A Great Idea* series describes a NACA member's effective approach to fundraising, organizational development, use of technology, community mobilization, electoral advocacy, or communications. Many members have advised NACA staff that this valuable resource —readable in one brief sitting — has triggered ideas for them or helped them to refine approaches that they have used successfully.

★ **Issue-specific Conferences —** NACA convened five issue-specific conferences and training sessions during the year, all designed to enhance the knowledge of NACA members.

- Developing An Advocate's Child Welfare Agenda
- What's Next in Children's Health?
- Outreach and Enrollment Evaluation Workshop
- Translating Research into Advocacy In the Field of Early Care and Education
- Mini-Health Grant Evaluation Meeting

★ **Forum of Chief Executives —** The Forum is historically the core of NACA's services to members. It was this annual gathering of the executive directors of child advocacy organizations that led to the founding of the National Association of Child Advocates. The Forum continues to be *the* most valued NACA service today. It features a mixture of plenary sessions and workshops that allow NACA executive directors to learn more about promising practices, identify colleagues with particular areas of expertise, engage in valuable dialogue with leaders in children's policy, and to re-energize for the coming year.

Advancing Special Initiatives

As the NACA network and the child advocacy movement mature, NACA has identified cutting edge strategies that can effectively position member organizations and the movement to meet the challenges of the 21st century. NACA moved aggressively in four pivotal areas:

- Community Mobilization
- Leadership Development
- Electoral Advocacy
- Strengthening Connections Within the NACA Network and Reinforcing the Sense of "Network"

★ **Community Mobilization —** In this era of devolution, power is shifting closer to the grassroots level. Recognizing this, NACA provided several services over the year to help members garner direct input and participation from citizens as they develop and implement agendas for children.

- **"Elements of Community Advocacy" Training —** With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, NACA hosted a two-day training for member organizations' staff to acquaint them with the best approaches for designing effective community trainings. NACA members demonstrated their effective training tools and discussed considerations in designing their training, including selecting their goals, participants, content, structure, follow-up and evaluation tools.
- **"Raise Your Hand for Kids" Promotional Videotape —** This videotape was NACA's first effort to provide its membership with a resource to explain child advocacy to the general public. Clearly articulating child advocates' mission, activities, and importance has always been difficult. This videotape, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, provided NACA member organizations with an engaging and highly professional presentation that explains advocacy, underscores the vitality of a nationwide movement for children, and promotes discussions about the specific needs of the children in each member's state.

★ **Leadership Development —** Understanding the importance of providing leadership tools to the current and future child advocacy leaders, NACA focused on providing new leadership tools to the current leadership and on preparing the next generation of leaders for the role they will soon undertake.

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- **Child Advocacy Leadership Institute (CALI) —** With support from the Packard Foundation, NACA initiated a new vehicle for developing the leadership capacity of the next generation of child advocacy leaders. Many NACA organizations continue to be led by their founders, some of whom started the organizations as many as 20 years ago. NACA recognized the need to cultivate their eventual successors, and to provide the kind of training in child advocacy leadership that is lacking in most academic institutions. CALI filled that void. It provided substantive policy information, organizational development skill enhancement, and a historical introduction to child advocacy to the staffs of NACA member organizations. NACA piloted the Institute in 1999 and plans to replicate it annually.

- **Internal Assessment —** Quantifying and qualifying the impact of child advocacy organizations has always been challenging. Child advocates work in collaboration with a host of other community and state leaders, service providers, and other advocates. This collaborative approach is a hallmark of the advocates' efforts as honest brokers, assembling divergent voices to speak out on behalf of children. As advocates work to advance agendas for children, little attention has been given in the past to objectively assessing the impact of their leadership role. NACA recognized this reality and set forward a plan to improve members' ability to assess their impact and depict their outcomes*, as well as a plan to better portray the role that advocates play in effecting change for children.

  NACA retained Innovation Network (InnoNet), a non-profit association committed to working with other non-profits to enhance their capacity to evaluate the impact of their work. InnoNet provided NACA member organizations with on-demand technical assistance and training regarding evaluation of their ongoing work and their planned initiatives.

★ **Electoral Advocacy —** Last year, NACA provided member organizations with *What's Legal and What's Not for a Non-Profit*, a publication from the Alliance for Justice that clearly defines permissible electoral advocacy by non-profits. Armed with this information and in recognition of the pivotal 2000 election, NACA initiated activities to educate member organizations about legal limits on their advocacy and to support their efforts to encourage candidates to adopt child-focused policy positions.

- **Federal Electoral Advocacy —** NACA, itself, entered the electoral advocacy field by developing and posting questions on its website for Presidential and Congressional candidates. The questions were developed to guide citizens who might have direct contact with these candidates. The questions were also shared with other national organizations involved in electoral advocacy to encourage a discussion of children's issues by national candidates.

- **State Electoral Advocacy —** NACA published 2 issues on electoral advocacy in the *A Great Idea* series to relay successful state practices to the membership.
  - *Colorado Children's Campaign '98 Campaign for Kids*
  - *Child Advocates' Use of Legislative Report Cards*

  Further, NACA developed an electoral advocacy tool-kit for its members including a template of questions to guide NACA members that might be interested in developing queries for their state candidates.

★ **Strengthening Connections Within the NACA Community and Reinforcing the Sense of "Network" —** While NACA has always been a network, efforts this year focused on forging stronger connections within the network, and actively portraying the member organizations' connection to a "nationwide" — not merely a "national" — network. It is the nationwide perspective that distinguishes NACA from other national organizations. While strengthening the network itself lies at the core of NACA's fundamental services to members, the organization placed a special emphasis this past year on leveraging the benefits of the nationwide network.

- **Facilitated Discussions —** Connecting peers to peers through mentoring relationships has always been a component of NACA's member services. NACA has enhanced this service in recent years by tapping a small pool of funds to enable NACA members to travel to others' offices to gain direct one-on-one technical assistance from others in the network. The success of NACA's mentoring activities led to the development of a "facilitated discussion" initiative, in which NACA and a member organization co-facilitate discussions for the benefit of other members.

- **Members' Only Forum —** NACA joined the technological revolution during this year by establishing a secure site on its website for members' only discussions. Akin to a list serve, NACA's Members Only forum allows the staff of NACA member organizations to pose questions, seek advice, and share information to and from their colleagues within the NACA network — strengthening the collegiality within the NACA network and emphasizing the expertise that exists within.

*NACA continued producing and distributing the Child Advocates Making a Difference series through 1999. The publication, developed to educate national and community foundations about NACA members' successful outcomes for children, has been temporarily discontinued until new funding can be secured.

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Member-to-Member Learning Takes a New Twist

Several NACA members indicated a desire to witness a citizen leadership development approach pioneered by Utah Children. NACA and Utah Children developed a process whereby a group of members could witness portions of the Utah training, then meet with Utah Children staff to discuss why certain approaches where used, how the approaches had evolved over time, and what the advocates might do differently. The discussion was a success, as was a second facilitated discussion in Oklahoma.

Strengthening NACA's Internal Structure

NACA placed special emphasis over the year on building and strengthening the organization's infrastructure. Two key initiatives were implemented.

★ **KIDS COUNT Coordinator —** An exciting addition to NACA's staff was the placement of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Network Coordinator at NACA's office. KIDS COUNT is the Foundation's groundbreaking 10-year-old initiative to gather vital state-by-state data about the status of children in this country each year, to publicize that information, and to use it to improve public policy. The Casey Foundation recognized that cross-fertilization among its network of grantees would be enhanced by hiring a Network Coordinator. Acknowledging the similarities between the KIDS COUNT and NACA missions, as well as the overlap between the organizations that comprise each network, the Casey Foundation chose to place this position at NACA.

★ **Staff Structure —** The year also saw significant improvements in the personnel structure at NACA. Formal job descriptions emerged for all staff, a formal career ladder was put in place, and more attention was placed on improving the internal operations of the organization.

The Year 2000 and Beyond

The beginning of the 21st century coupled with NACA's 15th year anniversary have lead to considerable reflection by both the staff and the Board of Trustees. NACA will not stray from its traditional base of services to the membership. This is NACA's core. But, there will be a focused examination of NACA's internal structure and its ability to keep abreast of the work of NACA's members.

The organization will also work to broaden the financial base of its membership. The fruits of this work will not emerge overnight. Understanding the narrowing relationship between accountability and access to funding, NACA has taken steps, particularly with the *Child Advocates Making a Difference* series and the relationship with InnoNet, to emphasize the importance of outcomes for children and impact on children, to both funders and member organizations.

NACA, too, wants to examine how its members' work is directly impacting children and families. In what areas do NACA members excel? What are the areas in which NACA needs to provide additional training and support? How can NACA help emerging organizations? The answers to these questions will shape the development and provision of a true child advocacy curriculum in the coming years. And this work will also enable NACA to better market the capacity of the NACA network as a partner with key foundations for *nationwide* initiatives.

The future may also witness a more concerted effort to bring the experience and knowledge of NACA members to the federal arena. Soon key federal legislation will be up for reauthorization. NACA members know what the impact has been on children and families. NACA members know what the gaps are and they have valuable ideas on how these gaps should be addressed. NACA can be the convener, bringing the state voice to the federal discussion in a planned and productive way.

This is an exciting time for NACA. We're evolving, maturing as an organization and as a network. We sub-titled *Voices for America's Children*, our recent report, "The Progress and the Promise." We have made progress as envisioned by our founders, but we know that the true promise of NACA lies ahead.

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National Association of Child Advocates
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